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PP RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHCI #0128/01 1091340
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 181340Z APR 08
FM AMCONSUL KOLKATA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1971
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE USD FAS WASHINGTON DC
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHRN/USMISSION UN ROME PRIORITY 0026
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0100
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 2407

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KOLKATA 000128

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DEPT PLS PASS HHS, APHIS AND CDC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KFLU](#) [EAGR](#) [TBIO](#) [SENV](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IN](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: CONTIGUOUS INFECTED AREAS IN BANGLADESH MAY UNDERMINE THE
GOOD AI REPOSE IN TRIPURA; POSSIBLE NEW CASES REPORTED

REF: KOLKATA 111

KOLKATA 00000128 001.2 OF 002

1. (U) SUMMARY: Feedback from contacts and media reports suggest that Tripura responded well to the current H5N1 outbreak in the state. Rapid Response Teams completed culling on schedule, put in place effective restrictions on poultry movement, and villagers cooperated with the culling teams. Some new bird deaths were reported in two other Tripura districts. The effectiveness of Tripura's response may be mitigated because teams could not sanitize large tracts of infected zones located in Bangladesh. West Bengal and Tripura are the only Indian states so far where culling zones stride across the porous international border. Given such a situation, an AI response plan may need a regional or international mechanism to be effective. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) On April 12, Rapid Response Teams (RRT) from Tripura's Animal Resources Development (ARD) department completed culling 40,000 birds in Mohanpur (North Tripura District) and adjoining villages on India-Bangladesh border. Tripura's ARD Secretary told Post that clean-up and sanitizing operations will be over by April 17. So far, USD 42,000 has been paid as compensation. The state administration has imposed stringent movement restrictions on poultry products in the affected areas. The ARD Secretary said his government has installed gated checkpoints

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every 500 meters within the contaminated zone that are manned by ARD and police department officers. Officials are reporting any attempted movement of birds or poultry products to the ARD Secretary twice daily. So far there have been no reports of

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illicit poultry transit. Tripura has not reported any human cases of infection.

3. (U) Unlike in West Bengal where RRTs experienced resistance to culling, villagers in Tripura came forward to help. "We went to the villages and convinced everyone about the dangers associated with H5N1 outbreaks. Villagers were coming to us with their poultry," the ARD Secretary claimed. Media reports and Post's contacts corroborated this cooperation. (Comment: One likely reason for the high degree of cooperation with culling efforts is that Tripura's ruling CPM party has greater

popular support than in West Bengal, and with a smaller populace it is easier to raise awareness of the risks of AI. Also, because of the state's smaller size compared to West Bengal, the command and control structure for disaster response is more clearly defined. End Comment.)

14. (U) Tripura's government has pre-positioned 500 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), medicine and chemical supplies in each of the state's four administrative district headquarters, although there are no official reports of H5N1 outbreaks from other districts. Contacts reported some new poultry deaths from West and South Tripura districts. About 200 birds died at Nehalnagar and Rajnagar villages of Belonia subdivision (South Tripura). Bird deaths were also reported from another village named Mohanpur (West Tripura) and Chebri village of Khowai subdivision (West Tripura). On April 16, the ARD Department sent samples from these villages to Bhopal's High Security Animal Diseases Laboratory (HSADL) and is awaiting the results. ARD officials have not publicly commented on these new bird deaths.

15. (U) Officials responding to the H5N1 outbreak in Tripura (and in West Bengal) are still grappling with cross-border issues. In Tripura, large tracts of land within the 3-mile culling radius are in Bangladesh. Bangladesh's Moulavibazar village - which is currently in the middle of an H5N1 outbreak, according to Post contacts - is less than 500 meters across the border from Tripura's Mohanpur. West Bengal's Balurghat, Gitaldaha, and Malda towns, which experienced H5N1 outbreaks between January and March, faced a similar problem although it was not known whether nearby areas in Bangladesh were witnessing H5N1 outbreaks simultaneously. Although the GOI has urged Tripura to look into the possibility of district level joint operations with Bangladesh, Post contacts in Tripura and West Bengal say that no such cooperation has occurred yet.

16. (U) COMMENT: West Bengal and Tripura have identified culling areas that cross across the porous international border with Bangladesh. District administrators in India say they maintain informal liaisons with their counterparts in Bangladesh, but do not have a mandate to launch joint H5N1 containment operations. A regional or international mechanism for outbreak response and

KOLKATA 00000128 002.2 OF 002

prevention would have a positive impact on efforts to manage AI outbreaks in this region.
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